

CLAIMS

1. A method comprising:
receiving a search expression;
determining a first plurality of values for a corresponding plurality of purchasable items, each of the first plurality of values based on a similarity between the search expression and its corresponding one of the purchasable items;
determining a second plurality of values for a corresponding plurality of pairs of the purchasable items, each of the second plurality of values based on a similarity between two purchasable items in a corresponding one of the pairs; and
determining a corresponding optimum path between the search expression and each of a subset of the purchasable items based on at least one of the first plurality of values and at least one of the second plurality of values.
2. The method of claim 1 wherein the optimum path between the search expression and a purchasable item has an optimum sum of the values between the search expression and the purchasable item.
3. The method of claim 1 wherein the subset comprises a predetermined number of the purchasable items.
4. The method of claim 1 wherein the subset comprises those of the purchasable items whose corresponding first plurality of values are beyond a threshold.
5. The method of claim 1 wherein for each of the purchasable items, the similarity between the search

expression and the purchasable item is based on a similarity between the search expression and a description of the purchasable item.

6. The method of claim 1 wherein the similarity between two purchasable items is based on a similarity between descriptions of the two purchasable items.

7. The method of claim 1 wherein the search expression comprises at least one of a natural language search expression, a boolean search expression, and information from a plurality of user-enterable fields.

8. The method of claim 1 wherein the plurality of purchasable items comprises a plurality of books.

9. The method of claim 8 wherein for each of the books, the similarity between the search expression and the book is based on at least one of a full text of the book, an abstract of the book, and keywords for the book.

10. The method of claim 9 wherein for each pair of the books, the similarity between the pair of books is based on a similarity between at least one of full texts of the books, abstracts of the books, and keywords for the books.

11. The method of claim 10 further comprising performing a transaction for at least one of the books.

12. The method of claim 11 further comprising displaying a visible representation of at least one optimum path.

13. The method of claim 1 further comprising performing a transaction for at least one of the purchasable items.

14. The method of claim 1 further comprising displaying a visible representation of at least one optimum path.

15. The method of claim 1 further comprising displaying a visible representation of each optimum path.

16. A method comprising:

receiving a search expression, the search expression comprising at least one of a natural language search expression, a boolean search expression, and information from a plurality of user-enterable fields;

determining a first plurality of values for a corresponding plurality of purchasable items, each of the first plurality of values based on a similarity between the search expression and a description of its corresponding one of the plurality of purchasable items;

determining a second plurality of values for a corresponding plurality of pairs of the purchasable items, each of the second plurality of values based on a similarity between descriptions of two purchasable items in a corresponding one of the plurality of pairs;

determining a corresponding optimum path between the search expression and each of a subset of the purchasable items based on at least one of the first plurality of values and at least one of the second plurality of values, wherein the optimum path between the search expression and a purchasable item has an optimum sum of the values between the search expression and the purchasable item;

displaying a visible representation of at least one optimum path; and

performing a transaction for at least one of the purchasable items.

17. A method comprising:

receiving a search expression;

determining a first plurality of values for a corresponding plurality of Web pages, each of the first plurality of values based on a similarity between the search expression and its corresponding one of the plurality of Web pages;

determining a second plurality of values for a corresponding plurality of pairs of the Web pages, each of the second plurality of values based on a similarity between two Web pages in a corresponding one of the plurality of pairs; and

determining a corresponding optimum path between the search expression and each of a subset of the Web pages based on at least one of the first plurality of values and at least one of the second plurality of values.

18. The method of claim 17 wherein the optimum path between the search expression and a Web page has an optimum sum of the values between the search expression and the Web page.

19. The method of claim 17 wherein the subset comprises a predetermined number of the Web pages.

20. The method of claim 17 wherein the subset comprises those of the Web pages whose corresponding first plurality of values are beyond a threshold.

21. The method of claim 17 wherein the search expression comprises at least one of a natural language search expression, a boolean search expression, and information from a plurality of user-enterable fields.

22. The method of claim 17 further comprising displaying a visible representation of at least one optimum path.

23. The method of claim 17 further comprising displaying a visible representation of each optimum path.

24. The method of claim 17 further comprising providing links to the subset of the Web pages.